

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF INSURGENCY ON MINORITIES IN DISTRICT BUNER: TEHRİK-I-TALIBAN PAKISTAN IN FOCUS

Salman Khan¹, Abida Bano^{*2}

¹BS Political Science, University of Peshawar

²Department of Political Science, University of Peshawar

¹salmankhann368@gmail.com, ²abidabano@uop.edu.pk

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17627164>

Keywords

Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, religious minorities, displacement, religious freedom, security, post-conflict recovery, Buner, Pakistan

Article History

Received: 11 September 2025

Accepted: 21 October 2025

Published: 04 November 2025

Copyright @Author

Corresponding Author: *

Abida Bano

Abstract

This paper investigates the multifaceted impact of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) insurgency (2009) on religious minority communities in District Buner, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The primary objectives of the research were to examine the extent of displacement experienced by minorities, analyze the effects on intercommunal relations, and assess the economic and psychological challenges these communities faced during and after the conflict. Using a qualitative research methodology and thematic analysis, the study draws upon in-depth interviews conducted with minority community members, particularly Hindus and Sikhs, who endured significant losses during the insurgency in 2009. The findings reveal how militant violence not only displaced minorities physically but also disrupted their cultural identity, religious freedom, and economic security. The study shows that there is a temporary breakdown in interfaith trust and a slow process of rebuilding communal relationships in the post-conflict period. Based on these insights, the research provides targeted recommendations for inclusive post-conflict rehabilitation, minority-sensitive policy reforms, and mechanisms for preserving religious freedoms in fragile contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Insurgency in Pakistan has been one of the most studied regional security issues in South Asia, particularly since the early 2000s. After the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, a new age of militancy began with the formation of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). According to Rana (2013), the TTP's ideology, which was based on extreme Islamism and resistance to the Pakistani state, resulted in suicide bombings, widespread bloodshed, and the seizure of regions such as South Waziristan and Swat. According to Ispahani (2017), minorities have been targeted systematically through targeted killings, wrecking of places of worship, and forced conversions. Both religious and ethnic insurgencies in

Pakistan, according to analysts like Abbas (2014), flourish in areas with poor governance, high rates of poverty, and unresolved identity-based grievances. Moreover, Pakistan's insurgencies have become a part of a broader global security issue due to the link between local insurgents and transnational terror networks like al-Qaeda and, occasionally, the Islamic State (IS) (Grare, 2013). Furthermore, the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021 has empowered TTP groups and led to a resurgence of attacks in the North-Western districts of Pakistan (Basit, 2024).

Pakistan's internal security, governance, economy, and society have all been significantly and multifacetedly impacted by the Tehrik-e-

Taliban Pakistan (TTP) insurgency. Targeting security personnel, educational institutions, religious minorities, and political figures, the TTP launched a bloody campaign against the Pakistani government after forming in 2007 as an umbrella organization for many militant groups in the tribal areas (Rana, 2013). With high-profile operations like the 2009 GHQ siege, the 2010 mosque attacks in Lahore, and the 2014 Army Public School (APS) tragedy in Peshawar, which claimed the lives of over 140 people—primarily children—the group's activity peaked between 2009 and 2014 (Abbas, 2014).

Additionally, millions of people were internally displaced from the tribal regions, especially from the South and North, which resulted in long-term resettlement and humanitarian issues (International Crisis Group, 2015). Furthermore, attacks on Shia, Christian, and Ahmadi communities exacerbated sectarian divisions, leading to an increase in intolerance and religious extremism (HRCP, 2018). Recent human rights reports outline that fresh renewed militant actions along the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa frontier, mainly by the TTP-affiliated groups, have added to the threats and targeted assaults on religious minorities, underlining the continued helplessness of these people in conflict-stricken districts (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

TTP has targeted non-Muslim groups, including Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and Shia Muslims, because it believes they are heretical or politically disposable, and it is motivated by an extreme interpretation of Islam (Abbas, 2014). These assaults have included bombings at places of worship, forced conversions, extortion, abductions, and killings (HRCP, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2014). Minority groups in TTP-influenced regions sometimes faced threats to their lives and businesses, extortion, and *jizya*, an ancient Islamic levy on non-Muslims. The Sikh community in Orakzai Agency, for instance, allegedly had to pay millions in ransom in 2009 to prevent beheadings (BBC, 2009). Additionally, hundreds of Shia Muslims were killed and families were displaced because of deliberate attacks,

particularly in Parachinar and Dera Ismail Khan (Rana, 2013).

Contemporary security assessments confirm that similar trends of intimidation and extortion continue in multiple parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, suggesting that the insecurity of minorities is an ever-present aspect (PIPS, 2024). Based on the above-mentioned facts, this study makes a solid basis for studying the impact of TTP insurgency on minority communities in district Buner, which harbors a considerable Hindu and Sikh community to this day. Despite renewed focus on the dynamics of insurgencies in the merger districts, there are still few localized studies on the experiences of minorities in settled areas such as Buner. Thus, this paper asks: "How has the TTP insurgency in 2009 affected Hindu and Sikh communities in district Buner?"

Literature Review

Although insurgencies occur in specific political or socioeconomic contexts, research shows that they often follow similar structural patterns worldwide. It has been shown that economic disparities, identity-based marginalization, state fragility, and external interference frequently fuel insurgent movements. For example, insurgencies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have been explained by Collier and Hoeffler's (2004) "greed vs. grievance" paradigm, which contends that socio-political exclusion and economic incentives (such as control over natural resources) may both spur insurrection.

As the US and the USSR supported different guerrilla groups and governments in an effort to expand their respective ideological spheres, the Cold War era saw a dramatic increase in insurgent activity worldwide (Byman, 2005). In Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, insurgencies proliferated, with both superpowers backing rival factions. For instance, the U.S. helped the Mujahideen in Afghanistan in the 1980s to overthrow the Soviet-backed government, setting the stage for later terrorist groups like the Taliban and al-Qaeda (Coll, 2004). Examples of how insurgencies may turn into transnational dangers that affect international security, refugee flows, and

international counterterrorism operations include the Taliban in Afghanistan, Boko Haram in Nigeria, FARC in Colombia, and ISIS in Iraq and Syria. These worldwide trends highlight the significance of coordinated responses that address the underlying causes of insurgencies – such as social marginalization and governance deficiencies – as well as their military components (Gerges, 2016; Kilcullen, 2009).

Due to weakened governance systems, insurgent nations are more prone to experience protracted civil conflicts and authoritarian reversals (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Localized insurgencies like the Taliban's developed into transnational threats that prompted international military operations, as seen by the global war on terror, particularly after 9/11 (Byman, 2005). Moreover, extremist organizations frequently fill the power voids left by insurgencies. One instance of how state failure brought on by insurgency can serve as a breeding ground for transnational terrorism is the emergence of the Islamic State (ISIS) following the insurgency in Iraq (Gerges, 2016).

Prolonged insurgencies have caused complete economic collapse in countries like Syria, Yemen, and Libya, impacting industries vital to local and global economies such as commerce, tourism, and oil production (World Bank, 2017). Furthermore, instability caused by insurgencies leads to capital flight, lowers FDI, and increases economic risk for multinational firms (Abadie & Gardeazabal, 2003). Humanitarian disasters and widespread displacement are common outcomes of insurgencies. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2022), insurgency-related wars were the source of almost 40% of the world's refugee flows during the previous ten years. The same tendency has been present in the most recent conflicts in Sudan and Ukraine, reminding us of the long-term association between insurgency and mass displacement (UNHCR, 2025). In the case of Pakistan, similar displacement dynamics occurred during the counterinsurgency operations in Swat, Malakand, and FATA, leading to tremendous socioeconomic dysfunction (Ahmad et al., 2025). Abbas (2009) reports that the TTP's ideology is based on a Wahhabi-Deobandi synthesis, which

does not leave much space for religious diversity or minority protection. The group not only attacked the state but also targeted civilians, particularly minorities who were considered heretical or apostate by them. They attacked churches, gurdwaras, temples, and minority schools in their campaign (Rana, 2013). The Swat region and surrounding areas, including Buner, were hotbeds of Taliban activity between 2007 and 2009. Due to TTP violence, minority populations in conflict-affected areas, including District Buner, Orakzai, and Swat, have endured severe socioeconomic and psychological hardship. Hindu and Sikh families are reportedly being displaced in large numbers out of fear of persecution and militant rule. (Amnesty International, 2010).

Although the Swat and tribal regions have received considerable scholarly attention, there are still few studies specifically on District Buner, particularly regarding minority rights. Most research ignores district-specific subtleties in favor of aggregating data at the provincial or national levels. This research, using district-level data and supporting policy change and minority protection measures, will offer fresh perspectives on the lived experiences of minorities in Buner both during and after the TTP insurgency.

Emergence of TTP in Malakand Division: Historical Trajectory

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was officially formed in December 2007 under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud. It was formed as a coalition of various militant groups active in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and tribal districts. The TTP's declared objectives included the enforcement of Sharia law, opposition to the Pakistani state, and support for the Afghan Taliban in their fight against NATO forces (Rana, 2009). The group's formation was a direct response to intensified Pakistani military operations in tribal areas and the government's cooperation with the United States after 9/11. Recent studies of the dynamics of security in Pakistan since 2021 reveal a notable increase in the number of TTP-related attacks throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which continues to confirm the persistent nature of the

insurgency issue as a challenge to the stability of the state and the security of minorities (Khan, 2025). The TTP capitalized on weak governance and the perceived marginalization of Pashtun districts, recruiting militants and consolidating power through ideological, ethnic, and socio-political narratives (Abbas, 2008).

TTP's operations continued to expand over time. After Swat, in early 2009, Taliban militants extended their influence on Buner District, initially under the pretext of a peacekeeping force. However, this peacekeeping mission quickly escalated into a de facto occupation. These militants established checkpoints, imposed their version of Shariah law, and targeted police stations and government institutions (Abbas, 2009). These advances followed a peace deal between the Pakistani government and the TTP in Swat, which permitted the implementation of Shariah law in the Malakand Division. Encouraged by the agreement, Taliban fighters entered Buner in April 2009—just 100 kilometers from Islamabad—triggering national and international alarm (BBC News, 2009; Yusuf, 2009).

The Taliban's takeover led to one of the largest internal displacements in Pakistan's history. Between April and July 2009, an estimated 2.3 million people fled the Swat, Buner, and Malakand regions (Dawn, 2009). The militants enforced strict Sharia laws, carrying out public flogging, destroying girls' schools, and severely restricting women's rights. Religious minorities, particularly Sikhs and Hindus, were also targeted. Sikh families were forced to pay jizya (a tax imposed on non-Muslims). In one case, a Sikh man, Sardar Jee Singh, was kidnapped for ransom, while others were compelled to flee or pay heavy protection money. Religious sites were desecrated or shut down, creating an atmosphere of fear and suppression (Dawn, 2009). Recent reports suggest militants continue to operate in Malakand Division openly, and extortion is another major law and order problem challenging the security situation in the area (Dawn, 2022).

Military operations such as Operation Rah-e-Haq (Phase III, specific to Buner) and Operation Rah-

e-Rast were launched to eliminate Taliban influence. These offensives caused mass displacement, disproportionately affecting minority communities due to their smaller numbers and limited political influence (International Crisis Group, 2009). The Taliban also targeted sites of cultural and religious importance. The Shrine of Pir Baba, a 16th-century Sufi saint known for promoting peace and tolerance, was damaged. Additionally, homes around the shrine of Rana Chandarji, a Hindu saint near Elum Mountain, were destroyed or abandoned (Amnesty International, 2010; Express Tribune, 2016). These actions were not only physical attacks but also symbolic efforts to erase the religious and cultural heritage of minority groups.

Theoretical Framework

The paper utilizes two theories to explain the puzzle at hand.

Firstly, structural violence theory, introduced by Galtung (1969), holds that social, political, and institutional structures can cause harm indirectly by limiting access to essential rights, opportunities, and security. In this setting, the Pakistani government's insufficient protection, discriminatory assistance policies, and inadequate post-conflict rehabilitation are examples of structural violence that perpetuates inequality long after direct militant action has ceased. Minority communities' displacement, loss of livelihoods, and limited worship are therefore not merely the result of insurgent assault, but also of ingrained institutional negligence and sociopolitical marginalization that perpetuate vulnerability.

Secondly, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) describes how conflict alters intergroup connections and identity-based behavior. The TTP insurgency exacerbated tensions between majority and minority populations, forcing minorities to hide their identities, shun public religious rituals, and limit social engagement in order to be safe. This type of identity management represents group behavior under peril, in which people prioritize in-group survival over public recognition. The

short collapse of intercommunal trust and its gradual recovery in Buner demonstrate how identity and security are inseparable.

Together, these theories provide a multifaceted framework for understanding how structural inequities and identity-based exclusion contribute to the long-term repercussions of insurgency on minority communities.

Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the impact of insurgency on minority communities, i.e., the Hindu and Sikh communities in District Buner. To obtain rich, context-rich insights, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 25 respondents, including members of minority communities, local leaders, and human rights activists. Primary and secondary data were gathered from in-depth interviews, academic literature, government documents, reports, policy documents, and media publications relevant to the TTP insurgency and the rights of minorities. A purposive sampling method was adopted to identify participants with hands-on experience of insurgency or direct interaction with affected communities. Following data collection, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which helped identify, organize, and interpret recurring themes and patterns in the collected qualitative data. The research focused on District Buner, which includes the Tehsils Gadezi Salarzi, Daggar, and Gagra, and features a significant minority presence and a history of insurgent activity. The study covers the post-2009 period and focuses solely on religious minorities. By combining inferences from secondary sources with findings from the interview, the researcher was able to establish thematic patterns of how the TTP insurgency has influenced minority livelihoods, security, and social cohesion in Buner.

Findings and Analysis

The section below analyzes the key themes drawn from the data.

Displacement

All minority participants impacted by the 2009 TTP insurgency in Buner reported experiencing displacement. Most of the respondents stated that both direct terrorist threats and general regional instability forced them to flee their homes. There was no state-led evacuation strategy or direction in place, and the departure process was characterized as abrupt, unexpected, and emotionally stressful. Respondents mention that they had no other option but to leave to survive. The initial relocation often involved temporarily staying with family members in nearby regions such as Swabi and Mardan. However, many minority families finally sought refuge in Panja Sahib Gurdwara in Hasanabdal because of the protracted relocation and the host family's inability to house them permanently. For three to four months, these places of worship served as makeshift sanctuaries for refugees, offering not only physical security but also cultural and spiritual comfort to dozens of families.

Everyone was leaving their homes, but I was not ready to leave. Since my grandpa's time, this land has been mine. I resisted being told to leave. However, I had to leave because of pressure from my family. I was crying as I was leaving the place since I was not sure whether I would ever return (Interview Data)

The data demonstrates how displacement disrupts not only homes but also continuity with ancestry, community membership, and heritage. Findings from other Pakistani conflict-affected areas are consistent with this emotional and psychological element of relocation. For many IDPs, leaving was not just a practical decision—it meant abandoning their ancestral homes and cultural roots, a process accompanied by grief, fear, and disorientation (Iqbal & Hussain, 2019, p. 75).

Safety and Security

Fear was a commonly reported experience among all respondents during the TTP insurgency in

District Buner. According to the participants, they were always nervous and uneasy.

We were not sure if it was safe to return, even after several months. There were constant rumors that the Taliban might return (Interview Data)

One of the respondents emphasized the psychological scars that persist long after violent organizations have physically retreated. Rumors of the militants' potential return fueled fear even after they were driven out, demonstrating the long-lasting effects of trauma that communities experience as they recover from a battle. Fear and uncertainty endure long after the active phase of insurgency ends, according to studies done in other conflict-affected regions of Pakistan and its bordering territories. For example, ICG (2014) found that the state's incapacity to provide long-term safety left minority groups in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, such as Christians and Sikhs, feeling uncertain. According to the US Department of State's 2010 International Religious Freedom Report, minorities who were uprooted by extremist threats frequently stayed in host towns or camps for longer than required because they were afraid of reprisals or retaliation.

Restricted Religious Practice

Minority groups in District Buner had significant limitations on their religious freedom during the TTP insurgency. Respondents frequently and painfully describe being unable to celebrate religious holidays publicly, attend places of worship, or carry out religious rites. Religious identity was viewed as harmful when there were militants around, particularly when it was publicly shown. It was often held that public worship may incite militant feelings or draw unwelcome attention. They claim that while our worship may not have directly caused them troubles, it may have set off a chain of events.

According to the respondents' responses, even in the absence of direct threats, Gurdwaras and other houses of worship were voluntarily closed out of fear of militant retaliation. This group's self-censorship was a highly symbolic act, sacrificing spiritual expression and religious identity in order to ensure physical existence. A

psychological climate of anticipatory suppression is reflected in the respondents' fear-driven behavior, where minorities felt pressured to conceal religious symbols, stay away from customary events, and even change their look to blend in. The internalization of fear, in which silence was safer than outward displays of devotion, is a significant theme in the findings. This is consistent with Foucault's theory of disciplinary power, which holds that even in the absence of overt coercion, individuals internalize monitoring and modify their conduct in response to it (Foucault, 1977). For instance, Rehman (2012) observes that because of a pervasive culture of fear that inhibits public expressions of religion, religious minorities in Pakistan sometimes restrict their religious activities during times of militant domination.

Psychological Trauma

Respondents argued that the TTP insurgency had a direct impact on the prevalence of psychological trauma among the minority communities in District Buner. The results clearly show that minority communities in District Buner suffered significant and enduring psychological effects as a result of the TTP insurgency. The severe emotional toll of living under continual danger of violence and displacement is reflected in the trauma that both adults and children express, which includes emotional detachment, melancholy, anxiety, and continuous terror.

Even years after the collapse of the insurgency, respondents spoke of pervasive anxiety that persists today. This fear stems from both the potential for a future extremist resurgence and their prior experiences of violence and forced relocation. Many participants said that the mere mention of the term TTP or reports of extremist activities brought back the same sense of powerlessness and anxiety they had felt at the height of the conflict. This persistent mental anguish reflects what psychologists refer to as post-traumatic stress responses, especially when victims have not had any therapy or mental health care. Such settings frequently result in chronic traumatic stress, a condition where people are caught in cycles of hypervigilance,

expecting danger even during peaceful moments (Silove et al., 2017).

Inter-communal Relations: From harmony to hesitation

Respondents make it abundantly evident that prior to the TTP insurgency, there was a strong sense of harmony, social cohesiveness, and respect between the Muslim majority and minority groups in District Buner. Participants described intercommunal relations as excellent and highlighted the importance of minorities as members of the broader community. There was no feeling of marginalization or social exclusion. Minorities were allowed to openly engage in daily community activities, local customs, and festivities. Their historical presence in the area, even before the partition, had solidified a strong feeling of belonging. The rise of the TTP insurgency severely disrupted this long-standing thread of social cohesion. The insurgency fostered a climate of social disengagement, anxiety, and insecurity. Many members of minority populations deliberately avoided public life due to the possibility of violence, fear of being singled out by extremists, and concern over religious intolerance. Public festivities, regular social events, and interfaith contacts were either avoided or stopped. Respondent noted a broad feeling of hesitancy and self-defense, motivated by concern that those with radical views, such as certain clergy or local actors who support the TTP, may cause harm to them.

It is misleading to assume that the decrease in intercommunal contact is a sign of growing intolerance or hostility between Muslims and minorities. Instead, it exemplifies what Galtung (1969) may refer to as structural violence, a type of indirect injury caused by larger organizations or systems, in this case, the TTP, which subtly harmed peaceful coexistence by fostering an atmosphere in which conduct was controlled by fear. Although not overtly antagonistic, the Muslim majority was itself in danger. Its ability to assist or interact with minorities was therefore constrained. Minorities, for their part, reacted cautiously, withdrawing from public areas for their own safety rather than rejection. In conflict

situations, this is not unusual. According to research on communal violence in India by Pandey (2006), minorities frequently strategically go invisible during times of threat by avoiding meetings, lowering their visibility, and restricting their involvement to avoid drawing attention.

Economic Vulnerabilities and Loss of Livelihood

Some study participants said that the minority population in District Buner engaged in business-related vocations, such as running small shops, trading, and operating self-owned commercial enterprises. These companies were essential to the financial security of many families as their only source of income. These commercial operations suffered significant disruptions during the TTP insurgency. Businesses were most impacted in areas under militant control or regularly patrolled by militants, where the local populace was engulfed in dread and uncertainty. The widespread instability, curfews, and the constant fear of violence prevented many from keeping their stores open. For many families, these businesses were their only source of financial stability rather than additional revenue. Under such circumstances, it became almost impossible to maintain business operations. Because of the militant presence, it was considered dangerous even to try to keep stores open.

The economic impacts persisted beyond the conflict. Many families faced financial difficulties due to prolonged instability and frequent shop closures. To pay for necessities, respondents reported having to liquidate assets such as property, gold, or livestock. Even as the physical security situation began to stabilize, many people still faced severe pressure on their financial stability. Several interviewees stated that they were never able to return to their previous financial situation or restart their enterprises. Similar dynamics were seen in Swat during the Taliban insurgency, where minority-owned businesses suffered extensive damage and were mainly left out of recovery and compensation plans (Yusuf, 2013).

Double Marginalization of Women

Another respondent argued that minority women in District Buner experienced heightened vulnerability because of the intersectionality of their gender and religious identity during the TTP insurgency. These women were subject to firmly ingrained patriarchal standards that restricted their mobility, visibility, and access to help, particularly during times of migration, in addition to being stigmatized based on their religion. Particularly upsetting was the lack of basic services, including safe areas, female medical personnel, and sanitary supplies. These deficiencies affected women's dignity and emotional health in addition to their physical health. The respondents underlined that the lack of privacy and support during basic biological needs caused them to experience emotional trauma and shame. Women were often forced to suffer in silence because cultural norms discouraged even discussing these problems.

The experiences shared by female respondents closely resemble those of other conflict-affected areas of Pakistan. For example, displaced women from religious minorities in Swat experienced comparable difficulties in communicating their needs and obtaining healthcare without the assistance of men (Ali & Khan, 2015). Women who are displaced during conflicts frequently experience "gendered invisibility," in which their unique needs are routinely disregarded in interventions led by the state and non-governmental organizations (Zia & Yasin, 2018).

Unfair Ration Distribution

The respondent stresses a recurring pattern of discriminatory practices and systemic exclusion in the allocation of aid and rations both during and after the TTP insurgency in District Buner. Minority respondents frequently said that they did not have equitable access to government financial and food assistance. Instead, aid distribution was influenced by political and religious favoritism. These trends highlight the absence of accountability in crisis response systems and the larger problem of institutional marginalization. In many cases, minority

community members had to wait hours in line for little to no help. Those who belonged to the religious majority or had strong political ties, on the other hand, frequently avoided official distribution processes.

These results are consistent with previous research from Pakistani regions devastated by violence. Kirmani and Zaidi (2010) noted that political and faith-based aid networks often ignored minorities, particularly when official procedures lacked transparency and oversight. Ferris (2011) also highlighted this, emphasizing that vulnerable groups frequently experience double discrimination: first when they are displaced, and then when aid is provided. Religious-political hierarchy that impacts both policy and execution at the local level exacerbates this twofold discrimination against Pakistan's religious minority.

Conclusion

The minority communities of Hindus and Sikhs saw significant and varied effects of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) insurgency, including changes in their social, economic, psychological, and spiritual life in the district of Buner. They suffered severe emotional and cultural losses as a result of being forcibly displaced (through violence and threats). Since TTP is a religion-motivated insurgent group, minorities being "infidels" were on the brunt of it. During the insurgency period, a widespread sense of dread caused many to limit publicly expressing their religious beliefs and practices, resulting in distancing themselves from community life. This forced displacement also dismantled their ancestral ties with the culture and land, causing enduring psychological pain and trauma. Restrictions on worship, gurdwara closures, and religious identity concealing were examples of how militant control undermined constitutional liberties. A combination of overlapping vulnerabilities, including limited mobility, emotional trauma, and a lack of gender-sensitive assistance, exacerbated minority women's marginalization.

Despite District Buner's history of intercommunal cooperation, the insurgency

briefly shattered societal cohesiveness and trust as extreme ideologies bred mistrust and terror. However, there are indications of resilience and a restored ability to cohabit. Nonetheless, the insurgency's long-lasting consequences continue to exist in the form of institutional injustices, psychological distress, and economic challenges. Due to ineffective state-led rehabilitation initiatives, minorities were forced to rely on informal community assistance. All things considered, the study shows that the effects of the TTP insurgency on minorities persisted beyond the end of the conflict and continued into the post-insurgency era through persistent psychological suffering, economic marginalization, and structural injustices. The social cohesion, economic prosperity, and cultural identity of minority populations in District Buner were all hampered by the insurgency, which did more than produce short-term disturbances.

Overall, the paper emphasizes that comprehensive and inclusive post-conflict recovery frameworks are required to restore equality, dignity, and trust; military triumphs alone cannot bring about normality. The study recommends a comprehensive post-conflict strategy to ensure the safety, dignity, and inclusion of minorities. It calls on the government to make aid mechanisms inclusive and transparent while offering displaced minorities soft loans, recovery money, and compensation. It is critical to restore houses of worship, safeguard religious freedom, and provide gender-sensitive support, including mental health services and safe spaces for women of color. A more equitable and safe society for all groups may be achieved by fostering interfaith communication, inclusive education, and minority involvement in decision-making.

REFERENCES

- Abadie, A., & Gardeazabal, J. (2003). The economic costs of conflict: A case study of the Basque Country. *American Economic Review*, 93(1), 113-132. <https://doi.org/10.1257/000282803321455188>
- Abbas, H. (2008). *Pakistan's Taliban problem*. United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2008/10/pakistans-taliban-problem>
- Abbas, H. (2009a). Defining the Taliban. In *Pakistan's drift into extremism*. M.E. Sharpe.
- Abbas, H. (2009b). *Pakistan's troubled frontier*. United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2009/01/pakistans-troubled-frontier>
- Abbas, H. (2014). *The Taliban revival: Violence and extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier*. Yale University Press.
- Ahmad, Z., Khan, N., & Salam, M. (2025). Analysis of war against terrorism in Malakand Division: A case study of post-conflict scenario in Lower Dir. *Social Science Review Archives*, 3(4), 938-957.
- Akhtar, S., & Ahmed, Z. S. (2023). Understanding the resurgence of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 16(3), 285-306. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17467586.2023.2280924>
- Ali, A., & Raza, S. (2021). Insurgency and minorities: A case study of post-conflict recovery in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, 12(1), 45-62.
- Ali, S., & Khan, S. (2015). Displacement, gender, and the challenges of reintegration in Swat, Pakistan. *Journal of Internal Displacement*, 5(1), 25-39.
- Amnesty International. (2010). *As if hell fell on me: The human rights crisis in Northwest Pakistan*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/as33/004/2010/en/>
- Basit, A. (2024). The transformation of TTP: Rise, fall, and resurgence. *Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research*, 6(2), 1-23.
- BBC News. (2009, April 22). Taliban 'control' of a Pakistan district. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8012500.stm>
- Byman, D. (2005). *Deadly connections: States that sponsor terrorism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Coll, S. (2004). *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden*. Penguin Press.

- Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2004). Greed and grievance in civil war. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 56(4), 563–595. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oep/gpf064>
- Dawn. (2022, September 13). Opposition flays KP gov't's 'poor' response to rising militancy, extortion cases. *Dawn*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1709787>
- Dawn News. (2009). Taliban demand jizya from minorities in Buner. <https://www.dawn.com/>
- Fearon, J. D., & Laitin, D. D. (2003). Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war. *American Political Science Review*, 97(1), 75–90. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055403000534>
- Ferris, E. (2011a). *The politics of protection: The limits of humanitarian action*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Ferris, E. (2011b). Women, displacement and conflict: The international response. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 12(1), 11–17.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison*. Vintage Books.
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167–191.
- Gerges, F. A. (2016). *ISIS: A history*. Princeton University Press.
- Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. (2010). *State of human rights in 2009*. HRC Publications. <https://hrpweb.org/publication/state-of-human-rights-in-2009/>
- Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). (2011). *State of human rights in 2010*. <http://hrpweb.org/hrpweb/publication/>
- Human Rights Watch. (2023). *World report 2023: Pakistan*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/pakistan>
- International Crisis Group. (2009). *Pakistan: Countering militancy in FATA* (Asia Report No. 178). <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/pakistan/pakistan-countering-militancy-fata>
- International Crisis Group. (2014). *Policing urban violence in Pakistan* (Asia Report No. 255). <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/pakistan/policing-urban-violence-pakistan>
- Iqbal, Z., & Hussain, A. (2019). Minority experiences of conflict displacement in Swat and Malakand. *South Asian Studies*, 34(2), 70–83.
- Ispahani, F. (2017). *Purifying the land of the pure: A history of Pakistan's religious minorities*. Oxford University Press.
- Khan, I. (2025, January 2). Analysis: Can Pakistan stem the tide of terror resurgence? *Dawn*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1882576>
- Kilcullen, D. (2009). *The accidental guerrilla: Fighting small wars in the midst of a big one*. Oxford University Press.
- Kirman, N., & Zaidi, A. (2010). Faith-based aid, religion, and humanitarianism in Pakistan. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 29(2), 67–82. <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdq010>
- Pak Institute for Peace Studies. (2024, January 3). *Pakistan security report 2023*. <https://www.pakpips.com/article/book/pakistan-security-report-2023>
- Pandey, G. (2006). *Routine violence: Nations, fragments, histories*. Stanford University Press.
- Rana, M. A. (2013). *The militant: Development of a jihadi character in Pakistan*. Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies. <https://www.pips-pakistan.org/militant-developments>
- Rana, M. A. (2009). Taliban insurgency in Pakistan: A counterinsurgency perspective. *Conflict and Peace Studies*, 2(2).

- Rehman, I. (2012). *Minority rights in Pakistan: Historic neglect or state complicity?* United States Commission on International Religious Freedom.
- Silove, D., Ventevogel, P., & Rees, S. (2017). The contemporary refugee crisis: An overview of mental health challenges. *World Psychiatry*, 16(2), 130-139.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33-47). Brooks/Cole.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2009). *Pakistan: Displacement in NWFP and FATA*. <https://www.unhcr.org/>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2022). *Global trends: Forced displacement in 2022*. <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2022/>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2025, June 12). *Number of people uprooted by war at shocking, decade-high levels – UNHCR*. <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/unhcr-global-trends-2024-report-embargoed-press-release.pdf>
- World Bank. (2017). *The toll of war: The economic and social consequences of the conflict in Syria*. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/908511503658675790/>
- Yousaf, H. (2009). Taliban's expansion into Buner: Threats and responses. *The Friday Times*.
- Yousaf, H. (2013a). Conflict dynamics in Swat. In A. Yousaf (Ed.), *Insurgency and counterinsurgency in South Asia* (pp. 137-156). United States Institute of Peace.
- Yousaf, H. (2013b). *Conflict dynamics in Swat* (Special Report No. 322). United States Institute of Peace.
- Zia, A., & Yasin, N. (2018). Gendered invisibility in disaster risk management in Pakistan. In F. Krüger et al. (Eds.), *Earthquake, gender and emergency management* (pp. 127-145). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68418-1_8